

Spring 2017

# Resilience, Reconciliation, and Redemption: An Initial Historical Sketch of Pioneering Black Students in the Plan II Honors Program

Richard J. Reddick

*University of Texas at Austin, [richard.reddick@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:richard.reddick@austin.utexas.edu)*

Emily A. Johnson

*University of Texas at Austin*

Ashley Jones

*University of Texas at Austin*

Tracie A.J. Lowe

*University of Texas at Austin*

Ashley N. Stone

*University of Texas at Austin*

*See next page for additional authors*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nhcjournal>



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Educational Methods Commons](#), [Higher Education Commons](#), [Higher Education Administration Commons](#), and the [Liberal Studies Commons](#)

---

Reddick, Richard J.; Johnson, Emily A.; Jones, Ashley; Lowe, Tracie A.J.; Stone, Ashley N.; and Thomas, James, "Resilience, Reconciliation, and Redemption: An Initial Historical Sketch of Pioneering Black Students in the Plan II Honors Program" (2017). *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council --Online Archive*. 551.  
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nhcjournal/551>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the National Collegiate Honors Council at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council --Online Archive by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

---

**Authors**

Richard J. Reddick, Emily A. Johnson, Ashley Jones, Tracie A.J. Lowe, Ashley N. Stone, and James Thomas

## Resilience, Reconciliation, and Redemption: An Initial Historical Sketch of Pioneering Black Students in the Plan II Honors Program

RICHARD J. REDDICK, EMILY A. JOHNSON, ASHLEY JONES,  
TRACIE A. J. LOWE, ASHLEY N. STONE, AND JAMES THOMAS

The University of Texas at Austin

From the inception of the integration of predominantly White institutions in higher education marked by *Sweatt v. Painter* in 1950, The University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin) has been a battleground for educational equity. The university continues to find itself at ground zero in the battle for race and equity in higher education and embroiled in the debate over affirmative action, first in *Hopwood v. Texas* (1996) and then in *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin* (2013; 2016). For these reasons, UT Austin serves as a bellwether institution for public, predominantly White institutions (PWIs) when it comes to integration. The legal challenges, coupled with evidence of a challenging campus climate for students of color, reflect the kind of hostility recently reported at Michigan, UCLA, and other public flagship institutions such as Texas A&M, where a group of visiting students from Dallas's Uplift Hampton Preparatory School were racially harassed and taunted by a group

of White men and women who told them to “go home” (Heinz). As UT Austin continues to confront challenges in recruiting Black students and maintaining a supportive campus climate for students of color (Jaramillo & Cannizzo), it is important to consider the ways in which the institution has and has not changed in the past sixty years. In addition, it is worth noting that although Black undergraduates began attending UT Austin in 1956 (albeit in small numbers), Black students did not graduate from the prestigious Plan II Honors Program until twenty years later.

High-achieving Black students in higher education settings have been the focus of many research studies, which have noted that their success is contingent on a number of factors such as faculty engagement, mentoring, and a sense of community (Bonner; Fries-Britt, “Identifying”; Griffin). This study documents the experiences of the first Black graduates of the prestigious Plan II honors degree program who attended UT Austin in the late 1970s and early 1980s. While participants lauded the rigor, breadth, and small size of the honors program, they also experienced many of the same struggles as present-day Black students, including tokenism, racism, pressure to prove their worth, and a desire for kinship. These findings can help to improve honors programs by illuminating the unique challenges experienced by Black honors students of the past and making connections to higher education today.

## STUDY BACKGROUND

The Plan II Honors Program was founded in 1935 by H. T. Parlin, Professor of English and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (Click). Since then, the program has become one of the university’s and the nation’s premier honors programs (Sullivan; Willingham). Plan II alumni are among the most heralded graduates of UT Austin, with the list of prominent Plan II alumni including former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, Dr. Betty Sue Flowers, Kinky Friedman, and Austin Ligon (founder of CarMax) (McAndrew). While these alumni are worthy of recognition, they are all White. Black Plan II alumni of note include filmmaker Shola Lynch and former Texas State Representative Ron Wilson (Plan II Honors), but Black students are underrepresented in the Plan II student body. Two factors that account for the underrepresentation are a separate Plan II application, in addition to the one required of all UT Austin students, and the fact that high-achieving students of color who apply to elite institutions often receive multiple competitive scholarship offers. These factors contribute to UT Austin’s loss of prospective Black students to other universities, especially elite private institutions.

This moment in U.S. history is an opportune time to examine the involvement and experiences of Black students at UT Austin, both in Plan II Honors and beyond. In 2010, the documentary film *When I Rise* was released, reflecting on the life of opera superstar Barbara Smith Conrad, who was in the first class of Black undergraduate students to enter UT Austin in 1956 (Hames). Her narrative about earning the lead role in a campus production and then having it taken away because of pressure from the Texas Legislature encapsulates the many (un)known struggles of the precursors and pioneering Black students at UT Austin. Today, Conrad's story is one of reconciliation and redemption, though after nearly three decades: Conrad was named a Distinguished Alumna of UT Austin in 1985, and she returned to a campus that was still coming to terms with its discriminatory past (University of Texas at Austin Graduate School). Other efforts toward reconciliation and redemption followed, as in 2011 when Machree Garrett Gibson was elected as the first Black woman president of the Texas Exes (Division of Diversity and Community Engagement).

With this history in mind, the researchers conducting this study documented the experiences of four of the first seven Plan II Honors Program Black alumni. We chronicled how these Black alumni navigated higher education at a time when few students of color were enrolled in honors degree programs. We were particularly interested in how the benefits of Plan II—prestigious faculty, broad and rigorous curricula, small classes, and administrative support—interacted with the challenges of being a racially minoritized student in the early times of higher education integration.

In addition, this study informs the present generation of higher education practitioners, scholars, and policymakers, who still confront paltry enrollments for students of color and campus climates that are not always welcoming to racial diversity. Even though programs like Plan II strongly support students' scholarly pursuits, social and environmental factors still shape student experiences. This study illuminates these different factors and their interactions. The experiences of Black Plan II alumni serve as reminders of the past, advice to the contemporary campus community, and powerful counter-narratives and examples to all students, especially students of color, of how to persevere with dignity and focus on the future. (*Note: We use the term "Black" to refer to "A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa" (U.S. Census Bureau, "Race" 1).* We recognize that this population is comprised of African American, Afro-Caribbean, Ghanaian American, and Nigerian American students, to name a few of the populations represented among Black Americans in 2017.)

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Our research team sought to shed light on this overarching research question: How do Black Plan II alumni describe, reflect upon, and make sense of their undergraduate experiences in the program and at the university? The answer to this question will help us to address an additional question: How do the experiences of the first Black Plan II alumni resonate within higher education today?

## BACKGROUND LITERATURE

High-achieving or honors students have often been examined in a colormute manner or assumed to be White or Asian (Barshay). A review of the past five years of issues of the *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council* (JNCHC) revealed only one article focused on the Black honors experience (Dula), and that article discussed the historical development of honors programs at HBCUs rather than Black honors students' experiences at PWIs. In fact, only a few articles each year even mention the term "Black," "African-American," "race," or "racial," mostly as a passing single mention in a demographic breakdown of students. From the articles that do mention Black students, we know they are seriously underrepresented in honors programs, often comprising only a single-digit percentage of students and never matching their percentage in the non-honors student population (Shepherd & Shepherd; Trucker). Even participant groups in studies of honors students are more White than the honors populations (Brimeyer, Schueths, & Smith; Young, III, et al.). The 2010 NCHC monograph *Setting the Table for Diversity* focused much more attention on Black students—particularly the articles by Pearson & Kohl, Materón-Arum, and Sanon-Jules—as well as other underrepresented populations. Unfortunately, this work has been taken up in few JNCHC articles since then.

Indeed, social science research historically framed Black student achievement from a deficit (Moynihan). Even when the analysis centered on Black student achievement, scholars posited achievement as "acting White" (Fordham & Ogbu). A robust community of researchers, however, has challenged this assumption, instead situating academic achievement largely within educational environments, positive and negative (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, III). In more recent years, scholars shifted their gaze to postsecondary experiences, noting the significance of faculty and peer relationships, self-concept, and environment (Bonner, II, *Academically Gifted*); challenges in predominantly

White collegiate environments (Fries-Britt, "Moving Beyond"); the centrality of co-curricular leadership experiences related to academic achievement (Harper, "Leading the Way"); and the need to prove themselves academically (Strayhorn).

The challenges facing high-achieving Black collegians are unique compared to their majority counterparts. For many of these students, persistence is more strongly related to person-environment or sociocultural influences than to academic factors (Ford & Harris). D'Augelli and Hershberger found that Black students' experiences on campus differ from their White counterparts based on aspects of their personal rather than academic backgrounds. Broadly, Black students at PWIs feel that the campus works against them (Fries-Britt & Turner). In Fries-Britt and Turner's study, Black students reported feeling marginalized and misunderstood within the classroom, particularly in social science courses. These students also felt that the social life and activities on campus were "Anglo-centric" (515). Similarly, D'Augelli and Hershberger found that racial isolation and discrimination were common experiences for the Black students in their study.

While these issues are typically faced by many Black students on campus, Fries-Britt ("Moving Beyond") voiced additional concerns for academically talented Black students, including internal struggles as they balance the development of their academic ability and racial identity. Sanon-Jules (2010) echoes these concerns: "While feeling some degree of pressure about their academic ability is characteristic for high-achieving students, African American students differ in the nature and intensity of the isolation they experience" (102). Some students experience moments in which they feel that, due to others' stereotypical beliefs, they need to conceal their intelligence in order to maintain social acceptance or to avoid accusations of "acting White." In other moments, these students feel a "pressure to prove that they are capable . . . not just for personal reasons; as members of the extended black [sic] community, they feel a responsibility to prove that blacks [sic] in general are intelligent" (Fries-Britt, "Moving Beyond" 57). This balancing act can leave gifted Black students feeling isolated from both their Black and White peers. Thus, finding support from both peers and faculty can be difficult but is particularly important for these students. In addition, Ford and Harris highlight the need for college counselors to be better trained to address the unique needs of gifted students generally and, in particular, gifted students of color.

Most of the studies on Black students in higher education, especially high-achieving Black students, took place after the participants in this study graduated. Analysis of these students' experiences adds to the growing

picture of the challenges faced by academically gifted Black students in higher education. These participants experienced an intriguing mix of isolation and kinship since they were not the only Black students at UT Austin but were each the only Black student, or one of two, in their Plan II cohort. Thus, documenting their experiences contributes to the existing literature by providing a snapshot of the role of Black pioneers in a time and place where institutional administrators assumed that desegregation would naturally lead to full integration of Black students into campus life.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The work of Sharon Fries-Britt and Kimberly Griffin, whose study of African-American honors students at a flagship university represents one of the first examinations of high-achieving African American students at PWIs, undergirds this study. Fries-Britt and Griffin describe their participants as occupying a “Black box,” which “capture[s] the confinement expressed in their stories because . . . their racial/ethnic background limits how their peers and faculty perceive and interact with them” (510). They further discuss how peers and faculty perceive their race and ethnicity, typically in an unflattering, stereotyped light, and how these high-achieving Black students respond to such stereotypes and assumptions. According to Fries-Britt and Griffin, high-achieving Black students experience surveillance, tokenism, racism, and self-doubt. In turn, they try to counter these challenges by employing strategies of resisting stereotypes, proving their worth, adopting biculturalism, and seeking out kinship. One of the goals of the present study was to discover whether the earliest Black Plan II alumni shared these experiences and strategies or whether the differences in time period, institution, and context resulted in different stories altogether. In addition, the researchers sought to interweave the “Black box” model with specific questions designed to understand the nature of the Plan II experience for these students.

## **STUDY DESIGN**

This research study employed a qualitative design to explore the experiences of Black alumni in the Plan II Honors Program. The team designed the study in this way so that individuals would construct and make meaning of their experiences, mitigating the power dynamic between the researchers and participants by giving participants the freedom to elaborate beyond strict questions and responses (Creswell). The flexibility of this approach also



provided for a better understanding of the contexts or settings that influenced the participants' engagement with the Plan II Honors Program.

The researchers engaged the participants in semi-structured interviews, which provided the team the opportunity to probe more deeply into themes or areas they considered important to the research questions as each interview progressed (Khan & Fisher). The team worked collaboratively to develop seventeen questions for the interviews, ten of which were open-ended and designed to investigate the participants' formative experiences (who were their allies and supporters, as well as the structures they found challenging), their sense of the community (connections to students, staff, and faculty), and their reflections on their time as a Plan II student (how their student experiences shaped their future career goals).

The team also agreed to an interview protocol to aid in gathering similar information from all participants (Patton). Three members of the research team conducted the interviews individually and audio-recorded them. Three of the interviews took place over the phone, and one took place in person. After completing the interviews, two additional members of the research team transcribed the audio recordings to prepare them for analysis, allowing every member of the team, other than the principal investigator, to have a direct connection with the content of the interviews.

Every member of the team took part in coding the interview transcripts, with each transcript separately coded twice. The team used both etic (established) and emic (arising from the data) codes; the etic codes in Table 1 came from the experiences and strategies identified by Fries-Britt and Griffin, and the emic codes grew out of the observations of the researchers. Although several emic codes emerged, the team narrowed them based on salience, pertinence, and frequency. The team then compared the two sets of codes for each transcript to identify areas of consistency and difference among the researchers' interpretations. After establishing a unified understanding, the team used the coded data to develop a picture of these Black students' experiences in the Plan II Honors Program (Creswell).

For each interview, one member of the research team interviewed the participant, a different member completed the transcription, and two team members (at least one different from the previous two) coded the transcripts. This method ensured that at least three members of the team actively engaged with each participant's interview text and contributed to documenting and interpreting their experience. In addition, those who directly interacted with each interview's text included both Black and White team members. Rotating responsibilities to involve multiple researchers' perspectives kept any one

individual or pair of individuals from monopolizing analysis of the participants’ experiences.

Finally, researchers looked for both confirming and disconfirming evidence of the theoretical framework (Lincoln & Guba). While coding and interpreting codes, the research team discussed areas that seemed to differ from the experiences of others or from the framework provided. Tables 2 and 3 note where evidence of the phenomenon was not present, and the narrative points out areas of departure or contradiction. As noted by the participants,

**TABLE 1. ETIC CODES DEVELOPED BASED ON FRIES-BRITT & GRIFFIN**

Codes	Descriptions
Experiences	
Surveillance	Noticing being watched or judged by peers/faculty
Tokenism/Isolation	Being the only Black student in a class
	Seeing few minority/Black faculty
Racism	Having their capabilities doubted
	Being accused of unfairly gaining access to honors program/privileges
	Being accused of not being ‘Black’ enough
	Feeling unwelcome
Self-Doubt	Continuous questioning by others affects view of self
Strategies	
Resist/Challenge Stereotypes	Suppressing anger; challenging “angry Black male”
	Engaging in campus activities/highly visible leadership; challenging “Blacks aren’t here/important/valuable”
	Feeling pressured to educate others on Blackness and varieties of Black experience (detrimental/beneficial); challenging “Black = gangs/hood”
	Engaging in “non-Black” behaviors & activities, e.g., “singing Mozart in the shower”; challenging “Black = uncultured/limited interests”
Prove Worth/Ability	Working twice as hard
	Feeling pressure to respond to challenges/questions, e.g., “I’m not an Affirmative Action admit”
Adopt Biculturalism	Learning from Anglo-centric stimuli for adaptation; from Afro-centric stimuli for connection & pride
	Switching communication styles for different groups
Seek Kinship	Connecting with Black faculty/staff

some areas of difference could be due to the large time interval between their experiences and the interviews. Further research will help clarify and explain any disconfirming evidence.

## FINDINGS

Data from the interviews can be largely categorized by the etic and emic codes focused on the value of Plan II and on differences between UT Austin and the participants' high schools. Table 2 and Table 3 indicate how many and which participants communicated evidence of the codes. The following

**TABLE 2. ETIC CODES IDENTIFIED IN EACH PARTICIPANT'S TRANSCRIPT**

Codes	Participants			
	Alex	Blair	Corey	Dorian
Experiences				
Surveillance	✓			✓
Tokenism/Isolation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Racism	✓	✓		✓
Self-Doubt	✓		✓	
Strategies				
Resist/Challenge Stereotypes				✓
Prove Worth/Ability	✓			✓
Adopt Biculturalism	✓	✓		
Seek Kinship		✓	✓	✓

**TABLE 3. EMIC CODES IDENTIFIED IN EACH PARTICIPANT'S TRANSCRIPT**

Codes	Participants			
	Alex	Blair	Corey	Dorian
Value of Plan II				
Small Classes	✓	✓	✓	
Challenging Academics	✓	✓	✓	
Strong Liberal Arts/Broad Curriculum	✓	✓	✓	✓
Supportive Faculty & Staff	✓	✓	✓	✓
UT vs HS				
UT: Larger		✓	✓	
UT: More Rigorous	✓		✓	

sections contain example quotations of each. To protect the identities of the participants, pseudonyms are used.

## Experiences

As noted, the experiences highlighted by Fries-Britt and Griffin include surveillance, tokenism/isolation, racism, and self-doubt. Two of the participants indicated they felt surveilled during their time at UT Austin; Alex described this feeling as particularly acute when walking into another race's "territory":

It made it kinda difficult sometimes to traverse the terrain, because you're going into an area where it's not that you're not wanted, but you're different. It's like a different thing, you know: "What's this person doing here?"

A more frequently occurring theme centered on the combined issue of tokenism and isolation experienced as they navigated the program. Most of the reflections included vivid experiences of being alone. Alex recalled, "I'm not even remembering who the other minorities were that were in the classes that I was in." Blair's recollection was similarly vacant: "I've been racking my brain. . . . I can't remember a lot of diversity." Corey spoke to having some scant experiences of connection, but overall noted that the sense of isolation was magnified by the lack of connection to other cohorts: "There were only two Black students in my cohort, and I wasn't really aware of the other cohorts. There wasn't really anything in Plan II that brought the other cohorts together." Dorian noted that the focus on academics might have precluded more connections among other Black students: "[I recall] one [Black student]. Well, maybe two. I did not see them that much though. I guess, everybody was trying to make it on their own." Dorian indicated explicitly that they perceived racism as an influencing factor in the environment: "I can imagine how many brothers and sisters applied to UT and Plan II and received conditional acceptance. It kind of ticked me off."

Racial isolation or balkanization featured heavily as Alex and Blair recounted co-curricular and social experiences. Alex described some of the isolation as being "self-imposed":

You noticed some [racial] tension outside the Plan II arena at the University sometimes amongst the students. The students would get in their different cliques along racial lines, so they had the Black

organizations, and the Blacks would hang around with only the Blacks. The Hispanics would be with their folks, and then when you looked into the Hispanic community, there appeared to be, like, a division between the folks that came from a higher socioeconomic background and the poorer people . . . (sigh). I won't say there was open hostility, but people tended to group together, and there wasn't a lot of cross-racial stuff. . . . That was the one thing you would notice—there was a lot of self-imposed segregation.

Blair similarly recounted rigid race-based divisions that seemed to be insurmountable, some of which were bound to function and activity:

There were things that were specific to Blacks: the Black Business Association, Innervisions of Blackness [UT Austin's gospel choir]. . . . There were a few Black people in the band, but some of the organizations traditionally did not have Black members. Back then, there were pretty much some things that Blacks did, like sports—certain sports, because I don't even think they had any Black players on the baseball team—but of course football and basketball. And then there were our own fraternities and sororities, but I don't know of any co-racial activities. There were Black people's things, and there were White people's things. Sometimes they mixed, and sometimes they didn't. There was not a lot of interaction between the two groups.

When discussing their academic preparation, two participants, Blair and Dorian, reported feeling very confident in their academic abilities. Blair, self-labeled as the “quintessential nerd,” and Dorian discussed the importance of solid preparation at an elite high school. Alex and Corey, however, indicated they doubted themselves even though they were admitted to a prestigious honors program. Alex recounted, “You come in from high school, you're basically making straight As, and then you get to college and then the first few weeks they tell you you're not as smart as you thought you were.” In Corey's case, the struggle was internal, and thanks to a caring faculty member, Corey found a voice:

Mainly, [I struggled with] finding ways to suppress my own bouts of insecurity and whether or not I would be up to the challenges of the program and then finding ways to improve my study habits. . . . [My English professor] actually was the one who convinced me that I did have the intellect to compete with the students that were in my class.

## Strategies

In the face of these negative experiences, the participants employed coping strategies. The tactics identified by students in the study by Fries-Britt and Griffin include resisting or challenging stereotypes, proving worth or ability, adopting biculturalism, and seeking kinship. From our interviews, only Dorian referenced a desire to avoid stereotypical behavior (“Harvard wanted me to play football; I refused to do it”), attitudes, or associations. When framing an attitude toward interacting with faculty, Dorian responded in this manner:

Don’t come in there with anything on your shoulder; we don’t need any of that. All we need to do is figure how we get from here to there. Here—first year, there—graduation. That’s it. Don’t talk to me about, “He’s *Who’s Who*.” I don’t want to hear any of that. I want to know—what kind of professor is he? What kind of professor is she? What kind of work do they do? Is it hard? Is it easy? That’s what I want to know.

Two participants referenced a desire to prove their worth or ability. Complementary to the experience of self-doubt, Alex mentioned wanting to achieve improved academic ability despite innate shyness:

I was always a quiet person, and we had people who were very forthright in their opinions and would speak out. So, in those small classes I receded into the background. I tried to do most of my damage in the papers that we wrote and stuff like that—versus speaking up in classes—so that was a bit of a challenge as well.

While professing not to care what others thought, Dorian wanted to be perceived as being on their level. “I didn’t have to cheat; that has to give a person some clout and give a person some real worth,” Dorian stated. “You say you had ten exams? Sure, I had ten exams too. You passed eight of them? So did I.”

The phenomenon of biculturalism was the most challenging to identify in the participants’ narratives although Alex and Blair did show signs of it. Alex described one style of behavior (shy, quiet) when in Plan II classes and around Plan II people but another style of behavior (gregarious, involved in a Greek organization) when around others, most of whom were students of color. Blair spoke more directly to the aspect of biculturalism that is often impressed upon young people of color for success in a predominantly White

and/or diverse society: “For me, it’s critical to learn from other people and have the opportunity to interact with people of different backgrounds and different experiences.”

Seeking kinship was the most common strategy among the participants. Alex was the only participant who did not indicate specifically seeking out Black allies, likely because of childhood experiences: “As an Army brat, I had always been in environments that had mainly Anglo constituencies anyway . . . so I was very comfortable in that environment.” Conversely, the other three participants placed a high value on connections to Black students, staff, and faculty. Blair recounted a welcome week that served as a launching point for many relationships:

We had a week of African-American—or Black—orientation, and I met a lot of people who remained my friends. So through that, through being open and friendly, [I was] able to meet lots and lots of people from all over the place, and then when school started I met their friends. And my circle of African-American friends grew.

For Corey, the residence life experience served as the origin for seeking kinship and became a space of community and expansion of a social circle. “From the moment I got into Plan II to the first year I stayed in an on-campus dormitory, I met a lot of other Black students through that experience, and then I branched out and got more involved in the university as a whole.” Dorian discussed the significance of having social connections for Black students in achieving social acceptance and approval: “Black students need to get together, not necessarily for the ‘hood, but you need to get together so that you can talk to each other.” Dorian added, “Put the seniors together with the freshmen. You’ve got to have that foundation so that you can operate. There’s got to be somebody that will see you sitting out there, if you’re by yourself, and say, ‘Come here a second.’ That’s all you need.”

## **Value of Plan II**

All four participants spoke favorably of their time in Plan II, and two participants made specific mention that they would “do it all over again.” The specific values identified by the participants were small classes, challenging academics, strong liberal arts/broad education, and supportive faculty and staff. They discussed acquiring skills in writing, research, problem solving, curiosity, interest in learning, critical thinking, and communication. Alex, Blair, and Corey all shared that they enjoyed the small classes that are a

feature of the Plan II experience. Alex noted that Plan II was “a small college experience within the context of a large university.” Plan II redefined Blair’s impression of being at a flagship university: “My understanding of a large university [was] very large lecture halls with lots and lots of people. And Plan II, there were opportunities for seminars and smaller classes.” Blair went on to elaborate on why these small learning environments made a difference:

I have gravitated toward small, intense learning opportunities, with seminars and small groups, and getting to know people and establishing relationships, and learning from other people. So, that’s definitely one thing that I got from Plan II . . . for me it’s critical to learn from other people, and having the opportunity to interact with people of different backgrounds and different experiences.

Corey presented a vision of how Plan II could open one’s mind, especially for those from sheltered environments:

It gives you a big picture of what is available to you and how you can achieve it, and it provides a very focused environment for you to do it in . . . particularly for somebody from a small town or from a very closed environment. It is truly a great way to expand your horizons without being overwhelmed.

Likewise, Alex noted that being in Plan II meant being surrounded by knowledgeable people doing exciting work:

I was tickled pink to be a Plan II student. I really was. And I felt that I learned so much and it did, kinda, stimulate your thirst for knowledge, ‘cause no matter how smart you were there were people that were smarter and that knew more. (laughter) Yeah. I mean, that was the amazing thing, that not only the professors but the students were so knowledgeable about stuff. It was a very stimulating environment.

The same three participants also mentioned the value of challenging coursework. Alex stated, “I thought [coursework] was very enriching, you know. It was some of the most challenging stuff I’d done.” In fact, that was why Alex chose to apply to Plan II: “it was like basically the closest thing that you could get to Harvard.” For Blair, the immersion in the classics had the greatest impact:



Just having an opportunity to do what I loved for class was probably one of my most favorite experiences . . . all these literature books that I didn't have time to read before, I had to read. I mean, we read *Three Musketeers*; we read Charles Dickens. We read just all great literature, and I was hooked.

Corey noted that the flexibility in scheduling was a strong point that allowed for individual growth. "You were given the choice of which [courses] to take and how to structure that program, so that was pretty good too. One word that comes to mind for all of those things is 'stimulating,' and another is 'exciting,' and another one is 'challenging.'"

All four participants reflected on the broad, thorough liberal arts education they received and the valuable skills Plan II developed in them. Alex talked about the power of the liberal arts and sciences focus:

It gave me a real good grounding in Liberal Arts education, and you get a solid foundation. And the emphasis on writing and research, that kinda thing, carries through. . . . You learn so much, and you learn how to think. Problem solving is something that just carries on throughout your work environment. As a result of Plan II, you're gonna be more well-rounded than, kinda, narrow in your orientation. So, you know a lot about a lot of things as opposed to a bunch about one thing, and so that was something that helped.

Blair pointed out some of the cognitively dissonant experiences proved to be the most valuable:

I had [a class] called Human Sexuality . . . we went to a gay bar, and that was the first experience that I had in something outside of my own scope of things. It was an opportunity to learn and to absorb and to just know that there's a bigger world out there than the little piece of it that I inhabit.

As a professional whose career involves quantitative analysis, Corey discussed the significance of communication skills and critical analysis in the Plan II curriculum. "You would really think [my job] would be involved with numbers, but my whole experience there was more along the lines of communicating what those bunch of numbers meant," Corey recalled, adding "That is where my Plan II experience came in really handy, because that is where I learned critical thinking and how to express ideas in a concise and clear way."

Dorian discussed how the curriculum provided a theoretical structure for examining one's place in society: "Plan II was really good for me because it let me explore theoretically where I fit in the world, and I could stand back and I could apply my high school to here and figure out where it was I fit."

Participants frequently mentioned supportive staff and faculty as critical and praiseworthy elements of their Plan II experiences. Alex pointed to the efficacy of a skillful advisor: "[My] Plan II advisor . . . was helpful in guiding me through processes and thinking about what to do after the degree was reached." In a similar vein, Blair discussed how individualized attention from the faculty enhanced the educational environment: "The teachers were pretty helpful. I felt that I was getting a superior education simply because there was so much one-on-one, that it was an opportunity to go past what the book said, and to talk about things and to experience things." Corey spoke highly of the faculty in contributing to the strong academic experience of Plan II:

The professors were just right on target. They kept the material fresh, and they kept it interesting. All of the professors showed a lot of knowledge in the subject matter they were teaching, so they were able to answer questions fully. They challenged you to think differently about certain topics.

In addition, Corey recalled a particular professor who made the learning an immersive experience:

My first year in Italian, the instructor was also very good in terms of helping me to navigate the social environment of UT, because we would do things outside of class. Like dinners and that kind of thing that would help you just to span the educational experience as well as the social experience of the university.

Even in critiquing the lack of racial diversity among the faculty and staff, Corey spoke highly of "DM," as several of the participants did. DM was a White administrator in Plan II for many years, and a valuable ally:

She kept me focused on what the overall ideal is behind the program, and then she also gave me some really valuable info on how to navigate the social structure of UT—how to be involved in the university without it overwhelming me. She was really a great guide for that aspect of the university experience.

## Differences between UT Austin and High School

The last area of emic codes involved a small number of differences between UT Austin and the participants' high school experiences. Perhaps surprisingly, only one alum specifically mentioned UT Austin as having a different racial makeup than their high school. Thus, the team eliminated this code from the final analysis. Two alumni, Blair and Corey, described UT Austin as significantly larger than their previous experiences:

*Blair:* I come [from a] small town, all the way through. People just did not seem to be interested in any more than their little half-block or whatever. And so, it was first off a big step for me to move to Austin . . . a large university.

*Corey:* [My hometown] is a very small town and . . . UT was an extremely large university. So when I got the Plan II letter, I was wondering how I was going to be able to navigate it, and my family thought I wouldn't be able to navigate it because it would be just too big and overwhelming.

In addition, two alumni—the same two who mentioned feeling self-doubt—described UT Austin as more rigorous than their high school academics:

*Alex:* The initial shock of getting adjusted to the rigor of college was the primary obstacle.

*Corey:* In high school . . . I could do assignments really at the last minute . . . whereas I thought in college I probably needed to improve on that.

## DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that, while the participants' stories all had unique elements, they had many experiences and strategies in common. The results teach us that, although not every detail of the "Black box" described by Fries-Britt and Griffin may be universal to the past and present experiences of high-achieving Black undergraduates, the portrait goes a long way toward helping us conceptualize these students' experiences. Even though this study's participants shared forty-year-old memories, the "Black box" model proved to be an apt framing of their experiences, demonstrating that in many

ways the climate of higher education has not changed much in the past four decades. Still, the narratives of these participants tell an important story with several key points.

First, Black honors students share some of the same experiences as all high-achieving students. They enter college having been at the top of their high school classes and experience the shock of readjusting to a world where everyone is as intelligent and many have superior educational resources and preparation. Honors students find a niche in their program but also have to confront shifting roles and expectations between the program and their other circles. Some of the participants explained the difference they felt between their Plan II honors courses and their general education courses. Dorian mentioned performing better academically in Plan II courses than in other courses, and Alex said there was more tension outside Plan II than within. Others said they felt comfortable studying with Plan II students but preferred to socialize with those outside the program. Alex observed that honors students can face stigma from other students, whether students of color or not:

We got picked on a lot. When you're in Plan II—I don't know if that still goes on—but there would be these open letter fights in the *Daily Texan* [student newspaper] about, "These 4.0 Plan II students have an easy ride," versus the people in engineering really had to sweat to make every A, so that was interesting.

Such reflections tell us that Black honors students need many of the same supports that all honors students need.

On the other hand, Black honors students also share some experiences and strategies only with other Black students. Based on our study, the most salient of these shared phenomena are tokenism/isolation and the importance of finding kinship with other Black students, faculty, and staff. Both Alex and Corey mentioned the value of on-campus housing in helping them adjust to campus life, both in seeking kinship and in creating a diverse environment that did not exist elsewhere, with Alex sharing how this experience shaped future relationships:

In the dormitory, we were very mixed. We had Black, we had White, we had Hispanic. . . . I tended to just congregate with the folks that I lived around in the dormitories . . . so the folks that I eventually wound up maintaining lifelong relationships with were the Hispanics from the [Rio Grande] Valley area of Texas.

In addition—and perhaps even more important when Black faculty and staff are still too few and far between—Black students need individuals of any/all races who are willing and ready to help them in a way that demonstrates connection rather than paternalism. In Blair’s words, meeting a best friend was “one of the most positive experiences that I had.” Corey further discussed how faculty and staff helped to reduce apprehension and improve the experience of campus climate:

The interest [the faculty and staff] showed, I really appreciated. They didn’t treat you like students as much as they treated you as friends and allies, so that was a really great connection for me. That’s how they helped me through the whole UT experience.

Dorian noted, “You need to find out who in administration is amenable to helping you move forward. You got to find that person. If you don’t find that person, it’s gonna be much more difficult.” These comments clarified the importance of feeling connectedness even in the absence of racial kinship:

*Dorian:* There wasn’t anybody Black while I was here—nobody Black, nobody Black! DM was all I had; she was it.

*Interviewer:* And she was White.

*Dorian:* That’s right. But she knew of [my high school]. That was the connection.

Thus, providing connections to Black faculty and staff, especially across campus, as well as majority faculty and staff who advocate for Black students is critical to the success and persistence of Black students.

Finally, by virtue of the intersectional issues between their race and ability, Black honors students also have unique needs. The salient need for this study’s participants was the role of mentorship—not just connecting with other Black people or other high-achieving individuals but seeing and being examples of high-achieving Black individuals. Alex said, “When you run across a Plan II graduate . . . it gives you an extra connection with somebody.” As Pierce has observed, pioneering underrepresented groups serve as role models for others like them. Corey acknowledged this role specifically:

No one else from my graduating class of high school went to UT, but because I was there, several people from the classes below me [who were also people of color] came to UT as a result, so to me that was a good thing.

The potential for these pioneering alumni to serve as mentors to a new generation of Black Plan II students is untapped, given that several of the participants mentioned that their only connection to UT Austin and Plan II today is through solicitations from development officers. Alex recalled, “I haven’t been as connected with [Plan II] as probably I would like to in the past. [But] I had a visit from a person doing fundraising for Plan II.” Similarly, Corey recounted, “My only connections to Plan II alumni is through University [fundraising], when they would come and ask me to do donations, and so then they would invite me to some of the alumni events.” If the development office has the wherewithal to solicit these alumni for donations, perhaps student affairs professionals need to access these pioneers as examples and mentors to current Black Plan II students and as recruiters for future Black students.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

This study adds to the available narratives about a group of students who are often excluded and hidden from the history of higher education institutions. For college and university administrators, this work is significant as it demonstrates the importance of filling in gaps in historical knowledge. Too often, campus historical documents, anniversary celebrations, and the like tell a singular university story, showcasing a timeline of events as if there were one time, one history, one story, but there are deviating narratives: the school’s White history, Black history, Latinx history, women’s history. UT Austin recently celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of The Precursors—the first Black students to attend the institution. Campus stories often read as if the color line was broken in a single moment, but research like the present study and many before show this not to be the case. Integration in Plan II did not occur until twenty years after the Precursors, and the still-meager numbers of Black students in Plan II show that the institution has much more ground to cover in achieving an integrated state. Campus historians need to avoid marking a single subgroup’s timeline as representative of the whole campus or of all members of that group, a practice that obfuscates the narratives of underrepresented students. All campus administrators need to seek out and hold up the experiences of underrepresented students in their programs in order to preserve the past more completely, honor students’ diverse narratives, and inform policy and practice for the future.

Sharing the stories of students who paved the way can also assist current students. The present generation is “standing on the shoulders of giants,”

oftentimes completely unaware of those who came before them, especially in programs like Plan II that have small numbers of Black students whose knowledge is limited to their four-year interval on campus. Though increasing participation of Black students should be a priority, in the short term administrators can employ the stories and connections of alumni to support students. Current Black honors students should be able to consider the resilience of previous generations of students and draw from the truth that those students persisted and excelled as they make their own journey through higher education. Higher education administrators can use collections of narratives similar to those in this study as a tool to encourage current Black students to persist and succeed in honors programs at PWIs.

At the same time, these stories should be available to students in a way that is honest and whole. Based on Fries-Britt and Griffin's concept of the "Black box" and other studies, Black honors students will confront obstacles in college. They will face the same challenges as their White honors peers and Black non-honors peers, and they will face the unique challenges of being at the intersection of these two worlds, and they need to know that those who came before them struggled as well. It will not serve today's students to gaslight them into thinking that race-based struggles are an issue of the past or that their predecessors met with success alone. Rather, today's Black honors students need to see that others have been where they are and have persevered. The stories of the struggles and academic strategies of students from the past can be powerful incentives for success among today's students.

Administrators should not rely on static stories alone but make it a priority to connect Black honors students directly with Black honors alumni when possible. Stories are good, but personal connections are better. Three of the four participants in this study mentioned the importance of kinship, and administrators can facilitate opportunities for kinship by creating an alumni mentorship program that is attentive to race. The participants noted that their only contact with Plan II or UT Austin was for fundraising purposes, but they are also valuable sources of knowledge, inspiration, and networking, and programs should build and maintain relationships with their alumni beyond fundraising. Previous generations of students can serve as role models, mentors, or advisors, and higher education administrators must be especially diligent in involving pioneering Black alumni in these roles. Mentoring relationships can start before students arrive on campus by having Black alumni contact applicants or prospective students. As Trucker pointed out, "The cycle of age, race, and socioeconomic discrimination is thus reproduced



further when potential honors students visit the program and see that it consists of mostly young white faces” (81). The Helen P. Denit Honors Program at the University of Baltimore intentionally recruits Black men to their program by encouraging current Black, male students to invite their friends for campus visits, recruiting from leadership organizations, and asking faculty members to notify the program of “lively minds” they encounter (Pearson & Kohl, 36–37). While a program is working to recruit more Black students, alumni can serve as a welcoming, familiar presence to show prospective students that kinship and mentorship are available.

In addition to establishing alumni mentoring programs, there is no substitute for increasing the access and retention of Black honors students. Each alum in our study discussed the absence of other Black students in the honors program, and although the stories collected were from graduates over forty years ago, issues of equitable representation continue to be salient on campuses across the country today. For example, in the past forty years, enrollment of Black students in higher education has increased from 8.4% to only 11%—notable considering that 13.2% of the U.S. population is Black (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES]; U.S. Census Bureau, “Quick Facts”), and Black student participation in honors programs is even lower. Administrators need to consider ways that their program admission requirements and recruitment strategies may limit access to Black students. If the program’s policies and procedures have not changed much in the past forty years, then it is no surprise that the student makeup has not changed either. As Pearson and Kohl noted, Black students—men in particular—may not self-select for honors programs due to their experiences in K–12 education, so intentional and aggressive recruitment efforts are critical.

Several articles previously published in *JNCHC* presented a commitment to diversity, but their analysis stopped short of examining the role race plays in the admissions procedures (Dubroy; Herron). Shepherd and Shepherd found in their study of two universities that “in contrast to their teaching objectives concerning student exposure to cultural diversity, the racial composition of both honors programs remains relatively homogeneous” (95). The curriculum alone can never communicate the importance of diversity if the classroom/program is monolithic. Smith and Zagurski described their institution’s commitment to improving racial diversity in the admission process by decreasing the weight of standardized test scores, which have been “shown to contain class and race biases while not accurately predicting retention” (55). As noted by Pearson and Kohl, all honors programs need to consider



their admissions policies and whether they help or hinder efforts to enroll a racially diverse group of students.

Each alum in our study mentioned a lack of Black faculty members to serve as role models. The percentage of Black higher education faculty is even lower than that of students, having increased only a small amount from 4.4% to 6% over the past forty years (NCES; U.S. Census Bureau, “Quick Facts”), which is barely half the percentage of Black students. Even more important, over 50% of Black faculty teach at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), so PWIs like UT Austin often have paltry numbers of Black faculty, nowhere near representing student enrollments (NCES). Higher administrators should meet with faculty hiring committees and stress the importance of hiring Black professors, especially in niche areas like honors programs. The narratives of the four Plan II alumni draw attention to the strategies Black students employed prior to the professionalization of student affairs administration and the increase in student support services; statistics show that all these student and academic affairs professionals have much more work to do. Providing support services for underrepresented students cannot make up for a lack of kinship and mentorship, though, and increasing enrollment and retention of Black students and recruitment of Black faculty must be part of the mission of honors programs.

Our findings also have applications for admissions and alumni outreach at PWIs beyond honors programs. Previous generations of successful Black honors students can play an important campus-wide role in serving as guides, mentors, or advisors. Although admissions offices regularly highlight the accomplishments of recent alumni to demonstrate that attending the institution is a wise investment, stories of previous generations often lack diversity, and Black alumni are underused in such efforts. Our study provides a starting point for considering the impact of narratives of previous generations. We focused only on narratives from four students from over forty years ago in a single program at one institution; many more stories about resilient and successful Black alumni from PWIs are as yet uncovered.

One way to build on the collection of alumni information available would be to add questions to exit interviews with faculty and staff focusing on students they were especially connected to during their tenure at the institution. As individuals retire or move on to other opportunities, access to records and memories of alumni can be lost to future generations. We hope that the findings and implications of our study can influence PWIs grappling with histories of exclusion and discrimination to reconcile with communities

of color and influence policymaking efforts to improve the campus climate for all students.

Finally, though the primary focus of this study is the honors program, the college experience ranges from housing and food and classes to student organizations and activities. The participants noted a separation between student activities and campus spaces. All parts of a campus must work to support full integration and inclusion. Materón-Arum mentions several ways to connect with other departments, people, and events across campus to support Black honors students. One of the most integrated experiences some of the alumni noted was living in the residence halls. Since room assignments were made without regard to race, the residence halls provided a space in which students naturally interacted with members of other races. This environment, coupled with the increase in programming and accountability in modern-day residence halls, can provide a space for interracial learning. Residence life staff should intentionally consider how race influences and is influenced by programming and how kinship and diversity interact or conflict.

These same considerations need to be a focus for staff members in student activities, leadership, health, safety, and all areas of campus so that they regularly assess fair representation of minorities; effective use of alumni; and good opportunities for kinship and interracial interaction. Such considerations should be part of the regular practice for institutions that seek to attract and support Black students. However, honors programs cannot simply hope that others will do what is needed. Cundall claimed that a student's race is "beyond the institution's control" (32), but the institution's policies and procedures heavily influence the racial makeup of the student body. Academic programs, especially elite honors programs, serve as students' homes for their entire academic career; as such, they have a responsibility to advocate for their students. If a program is committed to recruiting and supporting Black students, it must reach out across campus and work with others to provide opportunities so that alumni forty years from now have vastly different stories to tell than those in this study.

## CONCLUSION

Predominantly White institutions are still plagued with the consequences of structural and historical barriers to inclusion and equity. In an era when students, faculty, and administrators alike call for honest appraisals of how institutions can confront these impediments, it is important to record and examine the experiences of the pioneering students who were among the first

from their communities to attend these institutions. Black honors students are a particularly fascinating population to investigate. Their academic preparation and intellectual talents suggest that they might be inoculated from concerns related to academic performance (Ford & Harris; Freeman; Fries-Britt, “Identifying”), but scholarly evidence tells us that a lack of support and connection to their institution are the precipitating experiences that lead them to withdraw (Fries-Britt & Griffin). Our focus on high-achieving Black honors students who successfully earned their degrees reorients the scholarly record to focus on stories of success (Harper, *Black*) and potentially serves as a roadmap for current students, potential students, and administrators.

Non-Black students, faculty, administrators, and alumni especially need to hear these stories because they are part of the fabric of Black students’ experience as well. Identifying exemplars of persistence and grit may provide students from all backgrounds with models as they confront their own challenges. Learning how four Black Plan II alumni lived in and around the “Black box” illuminates and clarifies the progress that The University of Texas at Austin has made in four decades while highlighting persistent problems and presenting a collective challenge to all those who influence the undergraduate experience to recast the institution and its climate in a more equitable manner.

At times, the struggle toward racial justice seems interminable and insurmountable in a country built on institutional racism. However, it is important to focus on individual stories, like those here, and the specific actions that can be undertaken in response. Honors programs cannot correct nor eliminate the struggles their Black students face, but they can mitigate these struggles and provide opportunities for students to bounce back. Administrators need to commit to enacting specific actions like establishing a Black alumni mentorship program, evaluating admissions policies, and working to recruit Black faculty.

The alumni we spoke with showed tremendous resilience; administrators today should make it their mission to support their Black students so that they do not need that much resilience, and they can do this by reconciling their histories and seeking redemption in the form of earnest change. Perhaps Blair best exemplified the optimism that unearthing these stories of resilience, reconciliation, and redemption can provide:

You are the sum of all your previous experiences. So who I am is based on all the people I’ve met, all the things that I’ve done, all the courses that I’ve taken.

Our duty, then is to create a campus that gives underrepresented students greater opportunities to succeed both personally and professionally, allowing them to shape a new and better world.

## REFERENCES

- Barshay, J. (2016, March 31). The upside of academic tracking. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from: <<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/03/the-upside-of-tracking/475956>>
- Bonner, II, F. A. (2010). *Academically gifted African American male college students*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.
- . (2001). *Gifted African American male college students: A phenomenological study*. Storrs, CT: National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented.
- Brimeyer, T. M., Schueths, A. M., & Smith, W. L. (2014). Who benefits from honors: An empirical analysis of honors and non-honors students' backgrounds, academic attitudes, and behaviors. *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 15(1), 69–83.
- [Click, L. L.]. (1951, March 30). [Letter in memoriam of Professor Emeritus H. T. Parlin]. The University of Texas at Austin Faculty Council Archives. Retrieved from: <<http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/2000-2001/memorials/SCANNED/parlin.pdf>>
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Cundall, Jr., M. K. (2013). Admissions, retention, and reframing the question “Isn’t it just more work?” *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 14(2), 31–34.
- D’Augelli, A. & Hershberger, S. (1993). African American undergraduates on a predominantly white campus: Academic factors, social networks, and campus climate. *Journal of Negro Education*, 62(1), 67–81.
- Division of Diversity and Community Engagement. (2011). Machree Garrett Gibson to become first female African American Texas Exes president. Retrieved from: <<http://ddce.utexas.edu/news/2011/06/23/machree-garrett-gibson-to-become-first-african-american-texas-exes-president>>

- Dubroy, T-A. (2015). An epic mission. *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 16(2), 121–24.
- Dula, T. L. M. (2016). The ICSS and the development of Black collegiate honors education in the U.S. *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 17(2), 45–62.
- Ford, D., & Harris, J. (1995). Exploring university counselors' perceptions of distinctions between gifted Black and gifted white students. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 73(4), 443–50.
- Fordham, S. & Ogbu, J. (1986). Black students' school successes: Coping with the burden of "acting White." *Urban Review*, XVII, 176–206.
- Freeman, K. (1999). No services needed? The case for mentoring high-achieving African American students. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 74(2), 15–26.
- Fries-Britt, S. L. (1997). Identifying and supporting gifted African American men. *New Directions for Student Services*, 80, 65–78.
- . (1998). Moving beyond Black achiever isolation: Experiences of Black collegians. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 69(5), 556–76.
- Fries-Britt, S. L., & Griffin, K. A. (2007). The black box: How high-achieving Blacks resist stereotypes about Black Americans. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48(5), 509–24.
- Fries-Britt, S. L., & Turner, B. (2002). Uneven stories: Successful Black collegians at a Black and a White campus. *The Review of Higher Education*, 25(3), 315–30.
- Griffin, K. A. (2006). Striving for success: A qualitative exploration of competing theories of high-achieving Black college students' academic motivation. *Journal of College Student Development*, 47(4), 384–400.
- Hames, M. (Director). (2010). *When I rise* [Film]. Los Angeles: Allentown Productions.
- Harper, S. R. (2012). *Black male student success in higher education: A report from the National Black Male College Achievement Study*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education.
- . (2005). Leading the way: Inside the experiences of high-achieving African American male students. *About Campus*, 10(1), 8–15.

- Heinz, F. (2016, February 11). Black high school students visiting Texas A&M University harassed, told to go home: Texas Sen. Royce West. Retrieved from <<http://www.nbcdfw.com/news/local/Black-High-School-Students-Visiting-Texas-AM-University-Harassed-Told-to-Go-Home-Texas-Sen-Royce-West-368503021.html>>
- Herron, J. (2013). Notes toward an excellent Marxist-elitist honors admissions policy. *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 14(2), 17–24.
- Jaramillo, C., & Cannizzo, M. (2016, March 29). UT students in racially motivated assault appeal University disciplinary process. *The Daily Texan*. Retrieved from <<http://www.dailytexanonline.com/2016/03/29/ut-students-in-racially-motivated-assault-appeal-university-disciplinary-process>>
- Khan, S., & Fisher, D. (2014). Chapter 5: Field Interviewing. In *The Practice of Research* (pp. 109–26). Oxford UP.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Materón-Arum, E. (2010). African American males in honors programs: Suggestions and best practices for success. In L. J. Coleman & J. D. Kotinek (Eds.), *Setting the table for diversity* (pp. 91–98). Lincoln, NE: National Collegiate Honors Council.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- McAndrew, J. (2008, June 16). College of Liberal Arts names Michael Stoff director of Plan II. *UT News Archive*. Retrieved from <[http://www.utexas.edu/news/2008/06/16/stoff\\_plan2](http://www.utexas.edu/news/2008/06/16/stoff_plan2)>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). Chapter 2: Research Design and Management: The substantive start. In *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. (3rd ed.). (pp. 17–53). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Moynihán, D. P. (1965). The Negro family: The case for national action (a report for the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Policy Planning and Research). Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office. Retrieved from <[http://liberalarts.utexas.edu/coretexts/\\_files/resources/texts/1965%20Moynihán%20Report.pdf](http://liberalarts.utexas.edu/coretexts/_files/resources/texts/1965%20Moynihán%20Report.pdf)>

- National Center for Education Statistics. (2013). Race/ethnicity of college faculty. Retrieved from <<https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=61>>
- Patton, M. (1990). Qualitative interviewing. In *Evaluation and research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pearson, B., & Kohl, D. (2010). African American males and honors programs: Why are enrollments so low? What can be done? In L. J. Coleman & J. D. Kotinek (Eds.), *Setting the table for diversity* (pp. 31–40). Lincoln, NE: National Collegiate Honors Council.
- Perry, T., Steele, C., & Hilliard, III, A. G. (2003). *Young, gifted and Black: Promoting high achievement among African American students*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Pierce, C. (2011, February). *The untold story: URM pioneers at MGH*. Presentation at the Massachusetts General Hospital Bicentennial Gala and Alumni Reunion. Retrieved from <<http://www.massgeneral.org/news/assets/urmhistoryslideshow.pdf>>
- Plan II Honors. (2005). Plan II Honors graduation convocation speaker Shola Lynch. Retrieved from <<http://www.utexas.edu/cola/progs/plan2/parents-family/graduation/graduation2005.php>>
- Reddick, S. (2011). Alumni committed to enhancing campus life for Black students. *As We Saw It: The Story of Integration at The University of Texas at Austin* [Web feature]. Retrieved from: <<http://diversity.utexas.edu/integration/the-precursors>>
- Sanon-Jules, L. B. (2010). How honors programs can assist in the transition of gifted first-generation and African American college students. In L. J. Coleman & J. D. Kotinek (Eds.), *Setting the table for diversity* (pp. 99–114). Lincoln, NE: National Collegiate Honors Council.
- Shepherd, G., & Shepherd, G. (2014). Civic tolerance among honors students. *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 15(1), 85–113.
- Smith, P. J., & Zagurski, J. T. V. (2013). Improving retention and fit by honing an honors admissions model. *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 14(2), 55–71.
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2009). The burden of proof: A quantitative study of high-achieving Black collegians. *Journal of African American Studies*, 13(4), 375–87.



- Sullivan, R. R. (1994). *Ivy League programs at state school prices*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Trucker, J. (2014). Honors and the completion agenda: Identifying and duplicating student success. *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 15(2), 69–92.
- U.S. Census Bureau. Quick facts. Retrieved from <<http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/00>>
- . (2013). Race: About this topic. Retrieved from: <<https://www.census.gov/topics/population/race/about.html>>
- University of Texas at Austin Graduate School. (2011). Barbara Smith Conrad delights audience at film screening and performance. Retrieved from <<http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/alumni/events/whenirise.html>>
- Willingham, J. (2012). *A review of fifty public university honors programs*. Portland: Public UP.
- Young, III, J. H., Story, L., Tarver, S., Weinauer, E., Keeler, J., & McQuirter, A. (2016). The honors college experience reconsidered: Exploring the student perspective. *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 17(2), 177–89.

---

The authors may be contacted at  
[richard.reddick@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:richard.reddick@austin.utexas.edu).